

# THE HEALTH OF SITTINGBOURNE IN 1903.

At the last meeting of the Sittingbourne Council the Medical Officer (Dr. H. G. Sutton) presented his report of the health of the district during 1903. The report was as follows:—

"Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

"I beg to submit to your notice my annual report touching the health and general sanitary conditions of your district during the year 1903.

"Population.—Estimated to the middle of the year amounts to 9,080. The population is largely made up of workers in the brickfields and cement works and of their families. The work which they are called upon to perform is hard, and the men are generally of good physique. Many of the men are employed on barges and these bring the district into touch with London and other ports. This is no doubt a fact to be reckoned with in considering the public health of the district.

"Birth Rate.—There were 256 births during the year, which gives the birth rate per thousand of the estimated population of 28.2. This is lower than the rate for the past ten years, but I understand that trade in the principal industries of the place is bad, and this may partly account for the low rate.

"Death Rate.—The deaths within the district numbered 103, a rate of 11.3 deaths to every thousand of the estimated population. In addition twenty-two residents died in public institutions beyond the district, namely, three in the Keycol Hill Hospital for Infectious Diseases and nineteen in the Milton Workhouse. When these are added the total deaths number 125 and the death rate is 13.7 per thousand. Of the nineteen deaths which occurred in the Workhouse, nearly all were attributable to old age or maladies incidental to old age. The death rate, 13.7 per thousand, I consider a very low one, and I consider that there is reason to be satisfied with it.

"Infantile Mortality. — Under one year of age there were thirty deaths, giving a mortality rate per thousand births of 117.1. This is very satisfactory and becomes still more so when one considers that of these thirty deaths, no fewer than eight are ascribed to premature birth and thirteen to 'all other causes.' These latter include two from heart disease, two from expansion of the lungs, four from convulsions, while the remainder of the thirteen were also due to causes which do not show any defect in the sanitary state of the district. Only two of the deaths under one year were due to diarrhoea, a cause of death which is properly considered to show some defect in sanitary conditions.

"Zymotic Death Rate.—From the seven principal zymotic diseases of the Registrar-General there were sixteen deaths. These diseases are small - pox, measles, scarlet fever, diphtheria, whooping cough, diarrhoea, and fever, which includes typhus, enteric, and simple continued fever. The zymotic death rate is therefore 1.76 per thousand of the estimated population and this rate I consider satisfactory.

"Phthisis.—The death rate is .99 per thousand.

"Physical Features of the District. — The district lies low, the highest point being only 57 feet above sea level. The brick earth, which is abundant and near the surface, is year by year being cleared away and turned into bricks.

"House Accommodation. — The houses are generally of a good class, and the streets are so planned as to give plenty of air space. The average number of occupants per house is only five, and overcrowding is the exception.

"Sewerage and Drainage.—In connection with the new scheme of drainage, all the main drains have now been laid and the houses are in process of being properly connected thereto. The sewage is dealt with by septic tank and filter beds.

"Removal of House Refuse.—This is undertaken by the Council, and is carried out daily.

"Water Supply.—The water used for drinking and domestic use is obtained from Waterworks be-

longing to the Council. It is derived from deep wells, and frequent analyses attest its purity.

"Slaughter Houses.—These have been regularly inspected and found to be kept in accordance with the Public Health Acts.

"Common Lodging Houses. — Only one exists and that is in good order.

"Dairies and Cowsheds.—Those in the neighbourhood are satisfactory. The health of the cows is well attended to, and the vessels used in the milk trade are kept clean.

"Offensive Trades. — There are no offensive trades within the meaning of the 1875 Act in the district.

"Bakehouses.—None of these are underground, they are properly lime-washed and are generally very good in all ways.

"Factories, Workshops, and Workplaces.—On the brickfields work is mostly carried on out of doors. Privies are provided for the men and separate ones for the few women who are occasionally employed. The same remarks apply to the cement works. The paper mills and mineral water works continue to be well conducted and no complaint in regard to these has reached me. The jam factory was burnt down during the year, a new one is in course of erection. In the few workshops I have found that sufficient air space is provided for the workers, and that the lighting and ventilation are adequate. Sufficient sanitary conveniences are provided. I found the required notices displayed in all of them.

"Inspection.—I have made a house to house inspection of a great part of the district and in addition a general inspection. Several nuisances were found to exist, mostly in connection with cesspools and drains leading to them. These have been duly attended to. With the new system of drainage coming into general use this class of nuisance will I hope cease to exist.

"Infectious Disease.—The notifications received numbered thirty-seven. Last year they were eighty - two. These figures speak for themselves. Nineteen of the thirty-seven cases notified were removed to the Infectious Diseases Hospital. In all cases disinfection was properly carried out. The Infectious Diseases Hospital has more than once been absolutely empty and fewer cases have been received there this year than in any year since its opening. These satisfactory figures are no doubt largely due to the copious rainfall which has kept the drains and gutters flushed, and has also cleansed the soil.

"Small-Pox.—Two cases were notified from a house in Cockleshell Walk, the patients being mother and son. I am glad to say that the measures taken sufficed to stay the disease. Both cases recovered.

"Enteric.—Nine cases were notified. I regret that the disease has been of a rather severe type, five of the nine, or 55.5 per cent., having died. The cases were scattered all over the district and the source of infection was not generally ascertained.

"Scarlatina.—Twelve cases were notified: no deaths. Six of the patients were under five years and the remainder in the five to fifteen years age group. Eleven out of the twelve were treated in the hospital.

"Diphtheria.—Six cases were notified and two deaths occurred. Anti-diphtheritic serum is kept at the hospital.

"Erysipelas.—Seven cases were notified; most of them mild. In addition there was one case of puerperal fever.

"I trust that this report will meet the approval of the Council.

"I have the honour to be, Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen, yours obediently,

